

## Entertainers in Senior Living; Benefits, Recommendations and Safety Tips

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*This article is intended to help the Senior Living Community and Activity Director identify some key areas that may improve the process of setting up entertainment visits, keep the residents safe, prevent spread of infection and provide important information to entertainers.*

Visiting entertainers have become a regular part of programming in many communities large and small. Their visits often provide an enjoyable experience for residents who may not otherwise be able to participate in attending concerts and events outside of the community and provide beneficial socialization. Most entertainers visit multiple communities and rarely if ever clean or wipe down the equipment they carry in and out. Thus providing a vehicle for the flu or other unwanted guests to hitch a ride. During their visit, they often touch hands of residents as well as multiple surfaces. In addition entertainers may have limited understanding of or experience with Dementia and how to best communicate to or entertain for memory care communities. With education, resources and an entertainer policy; the senior living community may be able to better protect and provide appropriate and beneficial visits for the residents.

The senior living industry is experiencing rapid growth. Memory Care Communities are on a fast track of being built or modified to house the tremendous increase of cognitively impaired aging adults. With all this growth comes a need for activity departments to build and provide programs that engage and meet the many psycho-social needs of our residents which includes considering how to best prepare for and utilize visiting entertainers. Considerations for residents rights, safety, and infection prevention should be a part of the visiting entertainers understanding and/or policy provided by the senior living community.

A few observable areas of growing concern with visiting entertainers are; understanding of aging, resident safety consideration, quality of programming, resident rights and infection control. Beyond the calendar and agreement what else can Activity Directors do to prepare and educate entertainers to deliver safe and beneficial visits for our residents? Provide entertainers with a link to or pamphlet from you community, dementia information and an entertainer policy of conduct such as noted below.

*The following check list; "Recommendations and Safety Tips for Entertainers in the Senior Living Environment" is a starting point for Activity Directors and Senior Living Communities to consider adopting for ongoing and future entertainer visits.*



# Recommendations & Safety Tips for Entertainers in the Senior Living Environment

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- Plan ahead, confirm date, event, theme, location, etc.
- Review information about the community
- Be aware of and/or read dementia communication information
- Observe posted parking signs upon arrival, do not block emergency parking or entrances
- Check in and out on day of visit with identified contact
- Safety Tips on day of visit:
  - Do not bring into community; alcohol, medications, pills, vitamins or other consumable products in your personal bag, purse, etc.
  - Keep walkway clear of any trip hazards, cords, equipment, etc.
  - Maintain clearance for walkers, wheelchairs and residents safe passage for residents
  - Keep a watchful eye on all equipment and personal items during visit
  - Do not share entertainer microphone with residents
    - Best practice is to offer a separate microphone to residents, cleaned after visit
  - Do not enter resident rooms or community without staff approval and chaperone
  - Do not recount, share, post on social media any comments, or photos from visit
- Understand the residents rights
  - Refrain from touching or drawing attention to any resident who does not provide consent for or initiate contact with you
- DO NOT SHOW UP IF YOU ARE SICK OR HAVE BEEN EXPOSED TO THE FLU**
  - **CONTACT ACTIVITY DIRECTOR/CONTACT ASAP TO CANCEL VISIT**
- Follow Infection control measures to prevent illness from spreading into or outside community
  - Wash hands before setting up equipment
  - **Wipe down equipment after each visit**
    - **floor stands, speakers, instruments, cords, books, anything that a resident has touched, or has touched the ground or surfaces**
  - Wipe down, clean out microphones; microphone 'wind socks' recommended
  - Bring wipes, anti bacterial gel, tissues, etc. for personal use
- DO NOT ENTER A BUILDING WITH A SIGN OF CLOSURE DUE TO FLU**
  - Call Activity Director or Front desk for further instruction
- Understand and adhere to the Senior Community and/or Activity Director's "Entertainer Protocol"